

## Diary of Climatological Impacts: Overview

*“Although human inventions, achievements, and actions are obviously key factors in determining the course of human history, the forces of nature and other mechanisms beyond the control of individual human beings, or even states, play an even greater role, both directly and indirectly, by conditioning the circumstances that induce, produce, or permit individual or collective human actions.”<sup>1</sup>*

In July of 1998, the Climate Information Project began summarizing the reported impacts of climate and hydro-meteorological hazards as a briefing service for the Office of Global Programs and other parts of NOAA. As the methodology for the reports slowly evolved, so did the number of “subscribers,” and currently employees at several USG agencies and research centers, various international collaborators, teachers, and others unknown receive the reports. For some the summaries are merely interesting, while others actively use them as a supplementary source for monitoring events. Researchers creating natural disaster databases also use them for guidance and as a “shorthand” record for developing their own impact estimates. And finally educators have used these reports in the classroom to illustrate the effect and complexity of disasters.

Since their inception, the Climate-Weather Impact Updates (CWIUs) have always been an operational product, but together the reports are also emerging as a qualitative database. When read not as entries, but rather considered as a “novel,” the reports impart a powerful message about the seasonality of losses and gains associated with hydro-meteorological hazards. Whether it is a description of ecological impact, political confrontation induced by environmental stresses, or the losses felt by a rural area, the impact record tells a story about the interaction between humans and Nature. Various “themes” are present within the document, but perhaps most apparent is that, on a global and regional scale, the “surprise” associated with these events is in fact a constant rhythm.

The Diary of Climatological Impacts is presented here simply as a resource. It is only through the sheer volume of the individual reports that the lessons contained within can be illustrated. As an archive that summarizes events as they are reported, the emphasis of the diary is not on the accuracy of the impact estimates, but rather the evolution and human perception of the events themselves. The document is divided into chapters which span a year at a time; each year from September to August. Overtime, as the record gains in length, an effort will be made to spatially locate the events as well as provide seasonal summaries. The diary is an ever-growing document.

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<sup>1</sup> Keys, David, Catastrophe: An Investigation Into the Origins of the Modern World, Ballantine Books, NY, c1999,